

# Political Participation, Representation and the Urban Poor

## Findings from Research in Delhi

*In recent times, social scientists have noted the decline of state responsiveness to social claims. There appears an equal decline in the ability of existing structures of representation to provide poorer social groups influence over policy. On the other hand, there is also evidence of a crisis in popular representation in several low- and middle-income countries. Poorer social groups appear to have a limited capacity to present a reform agenda that addresses issues of basic rights and ensures livelihoods. To test this hypothesis, this paper studies sample communities in Delhi, representative of a broad cross section of the population. Through an analysis of the data collected, the study describes and explains patterns of political participation, focusing in particular on ways in which poorer social groups organise, obtain political representation and try to solve collective social problems. It appears, contrary to most expectations, that the needs and interest of poorer people are increasingly being met through the 'new politics' of social movements, the poor in particular still seek to represent themselves and to tackle their problems through political parties.*

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It is widely believed that an historic shift is taking place in forms of political representation available to the poor. From the classic patterns of the earlier 20th century, based on social relations forged in workplaces, organised in trade unions and other mass organisations linked to programmatic political parties, and concerned with the achievement of social and economic rights, it has moved to new patterns based on other sorts of social networks and goals, and involving, for example, social movements rather than unions, 'voluntary associations' rather than political parties, and local rather than national concerns. Political parties, though they were once linked to society through ideology and mass organisations, are increasingly only loosely organised followings of populist and charismatic leaders and/or rely on marketing themselves to voters through mass media, tapping popular sentiments through public opinion polls and focus groups [Roberts 2002:20]. It seems possible, as Castells suggests in his three volume study of 'the Information Age' (1996-98), that as a result of these shifts it is becoming increasingly difficult for many segments of the poor to build organisations and participate in effective channels of popular representation capable of exerting political pressure. He argues that "the failure of proactive movements and politics (for example, the labour movement, political parties) to counter economic exploitation, cultural domination, and political oppression, had left people (by the 1980s) with no other choice than either to surrender or to react on the basis of the most immediate source of self-recognition and autonomous organisation: their locality". But, he said, while "urban social movements do address the real issues of our time", they do so on neither "the scale nor on the terms that are adequate to the task" (Vol II, 1997: 61).

State responsiveness to social claims, and the ability of existing structures of representation to provide poorer social groups

influence over policy – always historically limited in many low and middle income countries – may, therefore, be on the decline despite the recent wave of democratisation. It is ironic that, alongside this wave, there should be evidence of a crisis of popular representation in many low and middle income countries,<sup>1</sup> and that poorer social groups appear to have limited capacity to present a reform agenda that addresses issues of basic rights and ensures livelihoods. Somewhat oddly, pessimism about the prospects for progressive programmatic politics in the party and union arenas stands alongside optimism amongst some researchers and development policy actors for the success of direct 'popular participation'.<sup>2</sup> Analysts point to a flowering of new forms of community-based associations and see these not only as replacing parties and unions in representing popular interests, but also as being more responsive to their constituencies and autonomous from external influence and control. The World Bank, for example, has argued that, "In most societies, democratic or not, citizens seek representation of their interests beyond the ballot as taxpayers, as users of public services, and increasingly as clients or members of NGOs and voluntary associations. Against a backdrop of competing social demands, rising expectations and variable government performance, these expressions of voice and participation are on the rise" (1997:113).

The research reported in this paper treated this proposition as a hypothesis – to be tested against evidence on how people generally, and poorer people in particular, are trying to pursue their social and economic rights and tackling collective social problems, and their relationships with political parties and with formal and informal associations. The paper is based on data from a sample survey of 1401 of Delhi's citizens, conducted in 2003,<sup>3</sup> that was intended to describe and to explain patterns of political participation, focusing in particular on the ways in which poorer

social groups organise, obtain political representation and try to solve collective social problems. The survey was part of a wider comparative study of 'Rights, Representation and the Poor' [Houtzager et al 2002], carried out according – as far as possible, given the widely differing availability of basic data – to a common methodology, in Brazil (Sao Paulo) and Mexico (Mexico City) as well as in India (Delhi, Bangalore and Coimbatore). The methodology of the Delhi survey is described in an appendix to this paper<sup>4</sup> and it was designed so as to address a series of questions about the politics of the present. Is it the case, in Delhi (and in Bangalore, in Sao Paulo and Mexico City), that collective action is now based on collective actors such as associational networks, perhaps facilitated by NGOs, capable of aggregating local groups? Is there evidence that 'life space' social networks (neighbourhood-based, religious, etc) are now producing the most politically efficacious collective actors? Or is there evidence, on the other hand, either of reliance on self-provisioning rather than political claim-making, or of persisting reliance on clientelistic relations? Where do political parties come into the picture?

The generalised account of global trends that served to frame our research on 'Rights, Representation and the Poor' is, at best, partially applicable to India where trade unions have only ever had a membership of a small fraction of the labour force and where political parties have – according to the views of most political scientists – long suffered from being only very weakly institutionalised. They may indeed be better seen as the followings of particular leaders who have been all too ready to sacrifice 'programme' to the compulsions of electoral politics in order to secure the loaves of office for themselves. Electoral politics in the 1990s have been marked by what Yogendra Yadav (1996) has described as 'the second democratic upsurge' (the first having followed on India's independence from colonial rule). The democratic upsurge of the 1990s has brought political leaders from some of the historically lower and more 'backward' castes to the fore, and it is associated with a pattern of electoral participation that is the reverse of that which is commonly found, because participation rates are higher amongst poorer, less well-educated and lower caste/class people. Poor people are in this way apparently somewhat more strongly represented politically than they were previously. But if no longer mobilised as much as they were through clientelistic relations, poor people are mobilised by the populist appeals of charismatic political leaders whose performance, in office, rarely offers much hope of social and economic transformation. In India, as is true elsewhere in the world, there is at least some expectation that the needs and interests of poorer people may now be met more effectively through the 'new politics' of social movements, rather than those of the old trade unions; through the burgeoning NGOs and of associations in civil society, rather than by the political parties. This paper in fact reaches what may seem to be pessimistic conclusions about the extent to which these trends are actually taking effect in Delhi, finding – in line with the wider trends depicted in the idea of the second democratic upsurge – that poor people, in particular, most commonly seek to represent themselves and to tackle their problems through political parties. There is little indication, in fact, of the existence of any other significant collective actors in the worlds of poor people. We also find, contrary to what has been argued, say, in regard to Latin America [e.g. Roberts 2002], that party political mobilisation does reflect major social cleavages.

Analytically the paper is organised around the problem of political participation. Our survey of Delhi's citizens enables us to assess political participation in various ways: by describing people's involvement in attempts to solve collective problems; through measures of support for political parties, of electoral participation, and of participation in political activities of different kinds; and through measures of associational practices. 'Political participation' is defined, generally, in the words of Verba, Scholzman and Brady as: "activity that is intended to or has the consequence of affecting, either directly or indirectly, government action" (1985:9). These authors also recognise, however, in their classic work on the US, that there are many social activities that are non-political in themselves but which do have political consequences (the overtly non-political is also political). They argue, therefore, that political participation should be understood as including "much ...non-electoral activity (that) takes place outside official channels. This includes a vast number of official contacts and communications with government officials as well as a large volume of informal, problem-solving activity among friends and neighbours in local communities" (1985:8, emphasis author). Rosenstone and Hansen, similarly, in their more recent work on political participation in America offer what they describe as an 'expansive definition': "Political participation is action directed explicitly toward influencing the distribution of social goods and values" (1993:4). The understanding of political participation in this paper follows this wider definition, and it is concerned with that 'large volume of informal problem-solving activity' to which Verba, Scholzman and Brady refer, as well as activity intended directly to affect government action.

### Delhi and Its Politics

Here 'Delhi' refers to the National Capital Territory, which constitutes a separate political unit governed by its own vidhan sabha or legislative assembly, with 70 constituencies. At the time that this study was carried out the Congress was in office in the Delhi government, and the Congress was successful (against the general trend at the time) in retaining office in the elections of December 2003. The BJP then held office in the centre, and the Delhi BJP is a relatively well organised and a powerful political force. The left parties have never had much of a presence in the capital.

The population of Delhi has grown very rapidly in the last 30 years, with large inflows of migrants from the nearby states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar and (especially) UP.<sup>5</sup> Although it was originally and is still primarily an administrative city, Delhi has also developed as a centre of service industries (including, more recently, some development in the IT sector), and it has large numbers of small and medium as well as some large-scale industries. According to the Economic Census of 1998 41 per cent of Delhi workers were in manufacturing and 23 per cent in trade and commerce. So though the city did not grow up in the manner of trading and industrial cities like Kolkata and Mumbai, it is nonetheless fairly described as an industrial city.

Important developments in the recent past have been the passing of legislation to move out 'polluting industries' from residential areas, which has had the effect of closing down some small and

medium industrial units. Industrial restructuring since the inception of India's economic reforms in 1991 has also led to factory closures and to the loss of industrial jobs. In June 2003, according to information put out by the Delhi government (on its web-site) there were as many as one million unemployed workers in the capital territory.

With regard to local politics a significant development under the Congress government over the past five years has been the establishment of the Bhagidari Scheme. This means something like 'Partnership Scheme' and it is said to be a mechanism for 'an active, effective and target-oriented citizen-government partnership'. Involving partnerships between Residents' Welfare Associations and Market Traders Associations and the Delhi government, the Bhagidari Scheme is intended to develop 'joint ownership' by citizens and the government of 'the change process' in the city. Residents' welfare associations, in particular, are involved in such tasks as securing payment and collection of water bills, electricity meter reading, house tax collection, the supervision of sanitation services, and the maintenance of community parks and community halls. It remains to be seen whether the scheme really does represent 'partnership' or whether it rather involves the off-loading of tasks by city government onto local associations. But the scheme has certainly given particular prominence to residents' welfare associations which are found, however, mainly in planned colonies and other higher income areas, and not in 'jhuggi-jhopris' (slum clusters) and other poor parts of the city. It is the intention of the Delhi government to extend the scheme to these areas, but this had certainly not happened at the time that our research was being conducted. There is no doubt that the Delhi government is inspired by the example of city government in Brazil, and it is intended to introduce a scheme of participatory budgeting.

## Patterns of Political Participation and Its Determinants

### Problem Definition

The first part of the survey asked questions about the extent to which people considered a range of public issues as a problem, both for themselves and for the city or for the country as a whole. The results were as appears in Table 1.

There was little variation between different groups of respondents, though as can be seen poorer people identified basic needs, violence and crime, public services and medical care as important problems, especially for themselves, to a greater extent than others.

It was then very striking that most people attributed responsibility for action on these problems to 'government' (whether local or national was not specified in the question), suggesting rather strongly – as Neera Chandhoke ('Seeing the State in India', see pp 1033 of this issue) has argued – that people continue to repose hope in the state, rather than on action in civil society.

The evidence from the survey does not suggest that there is very much difference between people, whether in terms of gender and age, religion, their residential status (owner occupier or tenant), their income, education or labour market status, in the attribution of responsibility. As might be expected there may be a slight tendency for wealthier and better educated people to attribute responsibility to individuals; and there is also a slight tendency both for those who are sympathetic to the BJP and for those who are active in associations to attribute responsibility

to individuals, but the variations shown up in the data from the survey are all very small and cannot be considered statistically significant. How then do people in Delhi go about trying to tackle such social problems?

### Problem-Solving

The survey distinguished between direct approach to government, taking legal action, going through political parties, or through 'big men', taking out demonstrations or petitions, or self-help, as approaches to problem-solving.<sup>7</sup> The attempt was in made in the way the question was asked to distinguish between 'going to a political party as an organisation' and 'going to an influential person associated with a particular political party', but it is to be expected that there is some overlap in the responses to the question.<sup>8</sup> The general findings of the survey appear in Table 3.

**Table 1: Assessments of Collective Problems**  
Percentage of sample defining as 'a big problem' + 'one of the biggest problems'

Problem	For Themselves		For the City/Country	
	All	Poor**	All	Poor**
Air pollution	69	68	84	81
Basic needs	44	65	90	93
Violence and crime	58	60	86	86
Public services*	62	70	na	
Medical care	44	62	78	85

Notes: \* Total for water, sanitations, roads and combinations of these, as being the services with which people say they have 'most problems'.

\*\* In this and subsequent tables this second set of figures refers to the 603 respondents (43 per cent of the total sample) whose average household incomes are said to be up to Rs 6,000 per month, and who can therefore be considered to be the poorer people.<sup>6</sup> Note that the comparison of the two sets of figures – those for the whole sample and those for the poorer sections – systematically understates the difference between the poor and the rest, because of the inclusion of the poorer sections also in the figures for the whole sample. There is often a clear difference between the figures for the two sets of observations, and it is important to note that this difference represents an understatement.

**Table 2: Responsibility for Problems**

	Percentage of Sample Attributing Responsibility for Action to							
	Government		Individuals		Associations		Market	
	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor
Air pollution	69	71	12	11	5	3	10	7
Basic needs	80	81	17	15	1	<1	<1	<1
Violence and crime	82	82	13	12	3	1	<1	<1
Public services	91	92	4	4	2	1	3	2
Medical care	94	95	2	2	1	<1	2	1

**Table 3: Problem-Solving**  
Proportion of sample reporting different channels in percentage

Channel	All	Frequency*	Poor
Government	36	94	37
Legal action	2	29	2
Political party	31	94	34
Big man	9	90	11
Demonstration	11	75	14
Self-provisioning	17	78	15
Other	5		
Any channel	56		60
One channel only	25		25
More than one channel	31		35

Note: \* 'Frequency' refers to the proportion of respondents who have used the channel on more than one occasion.

These data suggest that the citizens of Delhi are quite active problem solvers, certainly by comparison with those of Sao Paulo, and by comparison with those of Bangalore.<sup>9</sup> The possibility reflected in their generally higher scores in Table 3 (noting that the difference between the poor and the rest is understated in the comparison here) that poorer people in Delhi are more active problem-solvers, except – as might be expected – through the channels of the law and of self-help, and that they are somewhat more likely to try to solve problems by pursuing more than one channel, is striking.<sup>10</sup>

It is then of considerable interest to ask whether people undertook problem-solving action alone, or with the representatives of an organisation (as might be expected if NGOs or civil society organisations are involved in a major way in assisting people to represent themselves) or with other individuals such as acquaintances or family members. The last possibility is shown in Table 4 under the general heading of ‘friends’.

It is very striking that problem-solving is undertaken principally with ‘acquaintances or family members’ – and, it turns out, these are neighbours, in particular. There is little organisational involvement in any problem-solving activity, saving for demonstration; and it is quite unusual for people to attempt any kind of problem-solving alone, except in the (small in number) cases of formal legal action. In other words there appears to be rather a high level of collective action in Delhi – at least in the sense of people getting together to support each other in trying to tackle collective problems – but this does not involve much in the way of organisation, at all.

It is clear that people – especially poorer people – most commonly undertake problem-solving together with their neighbours. In those cases where people did cite the support of an organisation of some kind, those most frequently mentioned were neighbourhood associations (130 citations), followed by political parties (30 citations), then religious groups (12), unions (11), others (5) and lastly NGOs (cited only 5 times in total). The near-invisibility of NGOs in the ways in which people go about problem-solving, in view of popular arguments about the role and potential of these organisations, is especially striking.

### Who Are the Active Problem Solvers?<sup>11</sup>

The results of logistic regression analysis (Appendix 3) suggest the following conclusions:

- (i) There is a strong neighbourhood effect. Those living in jhuggi-jhopris are very much more likely than the residents of other types of colonies to be active problem solvers.
- (ii) Women in general, and all those who are outside the labour force (inactives) are much less likely to be active in problem-solving than are others.
- (iii) Those without education are less likely to be active problem solvers.
- (iv) Richer people are less likely to be active problem solvers (though the income effect is small).
- (v) Those who are permanent workers are more active in problem-solving than are casual workers.

Bearing these major analytical conclusions in mind, let us look in more detail at the empirical findings. In general, scrutiny of patterns of problem-solving in relation to basic demographic characteristics of Delhi citizens does not show up very marked variations. On the whole it is older men who are home-owners and long-term residents of Delhi who are those most likely to

be active in problem-solving (perhaps suggesting that engagement in problem-solving draws on ‘social capital’ deriving from local social networks built up over longish periods of time, and from which short-term residents and tenants may be excluded). The possibility noted earlier, that poorer people are generally more active problem solvers, is confirmed; and there are also some suggestions in the data that the poorer people, ‘disadvantaged’ in terms of income are relatively more inclined than others to problem-solving through political parties and participation in demonstrations, while those who are disadvantaged by sex (women) or by religion (Muslims) show a relatively stronger tendency to try to problem solve through approach to big men – with possible implications in terms of dependency.

With regard to gender (Table A1, Appendix 2) the differences between the sample of the poorer citizens and that of the population as a whole are not significant. In both cases, save only for the big man channel – where women are as active (or more active even, amongst the poor) as men – men are considerably more active (50 per cent or more) than women.

There is little consistent difference between age groups. The youngest people (aged between 18 and 25) are generally those least likely to be active in problem-solving, and the oldest the most likely. Older people, particularly amongst the poorer sections of the Delhi population, are especially more active than younger people in problem-solving through approach to government or to political parties.

There is a statistically significant correlation between the number of years that citizens have been resident in Delhi, and their involvement in problem-solving activity, both in the population as a whole and amongst the poorer sections. Home owners, too, are much more likely to be politically active than are tenants, both in the population as a whole, and amongst the poorer sections, save in regard only to participation in demonstrations (possibly reflecting recent political mobilisation, led by the former prime minister, V P Singh, over homelessness in Delhi).

In the Delhi population as a whole there is not a great deal of difference between the members of different religious groups, in terms of problem-solving activity (Table A2). Muslims may be less inclined than Hindus and Sikhs to try to tackle problems

**Table 4: Mode of Problem-Solving by Channel**  
(In percentage)

Channel	'Friend'*		Organisation		Alone	
	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor
Government	75	78	12	16	13	6
Legal action	65	70	13	10	22	20
Political party	79	76	6	10	5	6
Big man	80	79	14	13	6	7
Demonstration	60	60	33	35	4	5
Self-provisioning	87	91	11	8	-	-

Notes: \*here ‘friend’= acquaintance or family member; org= ‘with a representative of an organisation’.

**Table 5: Social Support in Problem-Solving by Channel**  
(In percentage)

Channel	Family		Neighbour		Other	
	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor
Government	27	15	73	85	0	0
Legal action	50	55	40	36	10	9
Political party	10	5	89	95	1	0
Big man	19	13	81	87	0	0
Demonstration	4	6	94	94	2	0
Self-provisioning	20	12	74	82	6	5

by going directly to government, and more inclined than Hindus to go to big men – though not as much so as Sikhs (who, however, constitute only a small share of the sample population). But the fact that poorer Sikhs do not go to big men at all indicates that the kind of ‘big men’ to whom wealthier Sikhs may go for help in solving problems are in a higher social class than those from whom most Hindus and Muslims are able to seek help. Amongst the poorer sections similar trends are found to those observed in the population as a whole, though it appears that the poorer Muslims are rather less inclined than others, including wealthier Muslims, to go to political parties or to get involved in demonstrations. There may be a hint here of a degree of alienation from political parties and regular politics amongst poorer Muslims.

The most important findings about the significance of basic demographic factors – the salience of gender, age, length of residence and (less clearly marked though it is) of religion – seem to reflect the persistence in Delhi society of hierarchical values.

### Socio-Economic Status and Problem-Solving

There is often a correlation between income and education; and this is the case in Delhi, too. There is a correlation between continuous variables for household income and years of education that is significant at the 1 per cent level (Spearman coefficient; and Table A3). This general correlation has to be borne in mind as we examine the relations between education and income, and problem-solving, separately.

The most striking finding is that at most levels of education, but especially at the levels of primary schooling completed, or secondary schooling completed, and via most problem-solving channels, citizens in the poorer sections are more active problem solvers than the general population. Poorer people with these levels of education are notably more active in problem-solving by means of approach to government, or to political parties or through participation in demonstrations. It is striking that those who are most active in problem-solving amongst the poorer sections, via all channels (except for legal action), are those who have only completed their primary education. The more educated (above primary) amongst the poorer sections, however, are not notably more active in problem-solving by approach to big men; and they are at least comparably active in self-help as those with the same education in the general population. In other words it appears that being poor but relatively well-educated quite strongly disposes people to being active in problem-solving, especially through approach to government or through demonstrations, and that education amongst the poor is associated with less reliance

upon the intermediation of big men. It also appears possible that those at lower levels of education, both in the general population and in the poorer sections are more inclined than those with tertiary education, to try to solve problems through political parties.

It seems quite clear that except when it comes to self-help the poorer people in Delhi are more active in problem-solving than wealthier people. The gaps between those with household incomes of Rs 10,000 and more on the one hand, and those with incomes of up to Rs 4,000 on the other are most clearly marked in regard to problem-solving through political parties, through big men, and participation in demonstrations. Poorer people, and especially it seems (from the discussion of Table 6 above), those with little education, are especially likely to problem solve through political parties, and – in, common with those who are disadvantaged by gender or religion – through big men and participation in demonstrations. But they are also more likely to try to solve problems through more than one channel. Wealthier people, and those amongst the poorer sections who have some significant education are more inclined to directly approach to government. Considering all these observations together, therefore, there is evidence that there is in Delhi a group of people who are distinguished – in a sense against the overall correlation between education and income – by being relatively well educated, in spite of being poor, and that these people are distinctively active in problem-solving.

The relations that are observed between education and income, and problem-solving activity, are cross cut by employment and labour status. As expected people in the poorer sections are almost invariably a little more active than those in the population as a whole; and as we might have expected those who are labour

**Table 7: Problem-Solving by Channel and by Household Income, Monthly**  
(Percentage)

Channel	<Rs2000	2-4000	4-6000	6-8000	8-10,000	10-20000	>20,000
Freq in sample	9	21	13	8	5	13	10
Government	39	39	35	34	32	34	37
Legal action	1.4	1.6	1.4	2.3	1.8	2.8	4.5
Political party	40	32	30	33	28	23	20
Big man	15	12	9	9	6	5	4
Demonstration	19	15	8	7	8	6	6
Self-provisioning	9	17	17	16	21	19	20
Any channel	60	62	58	54	51	51	56
One channel	21	25	27	21	19	26	28
More than one channel	39	35	32	31	32	26	27

**Table 6: Problem-Solving by Channel and by Education Level Completed**  
(In percentage)

Channel	None		Primary Incomplete		Primary Complete		Secondary Incomplete		Secondary Complete*		University	
	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor
Freq in sample	20	33	4	7	6	8	13	17	27	25	31	9
Government	30	32	33	31	39	47	34	36	38	43	37	41
Legal action	0.4	0.5	1.8	0	1.2	2	1.7	1.9	2.7	4	3.5	0
Political party	33	35	29	31	32	41	31	29	30	38	22	24
Big man	13	13	9	12	14	18	8	8	9	9	5	9
Demonstration	13	14	5	5	15	22	8	9	10	15	8	17
Self-provisioning	11	11	14	7	18	22	19	16	18	18	19	20
Any Channel	53	56	50	45	64	78	55	55	59	67	56	59
x 1 channel	21		16		27		23		27		27	
x >1 Channel	33		35		36		32		32		23	

Note: \*Secondary schooling completed (10 [=SSLC] completed+study to 11 or 12).

force participants are much more active in problem-solving than those who are outside it (Table A4), except in regard to approach to big men. Again it appears that this mode of problem-solving may be the resort of those with least means (by virtue of sex, religion, income and occupation). What might not have been expected is that the unemployed are as active in problem-solving (Table A4) as those who are active in the labour force.

Given that those who are employed as casual workers are usually less well paid than permanent workers and also likely to be less well paid than a significant fraction of the self-employed, it is quite striking (Table 9) that the casual workers appear often to be less active than others, though low income people generally, as has been shown, have a tendency to more active involvement in problem-solving than the population as a whole. The puzzle here is answered when we examine the relationship between educational levels and labour status, amongst people in the poorer sections (Table A5). Those who are better educated in the poorer sections of the Delhi population are more likely to be in permanent work or to be self-employed, and it is evidently these people who are also the ones who are distinctively more active in problem-solving. It does not appear, however, that workplaces are very significant sites of action. Only 23 per cent of permanent workers amongst the poor and 29 per cent of casual workers report having got together with work mates to improve wages or conditions of employment; and only very small numbers – 5 per cent – of those who are self-employed reported having taken any similar action.

Given the low incidence of workplace-based activity it is not surprising to find that some categories of citizens who are not participants in the labour force are active, nonetheless, in problem-solving. Homemakers and students are less active than the average citizen, but retired people and the unemployed are somewhat more active, especially through approach to government and, in the case of retired people, through political parties.

Finally we may examine the relationships between some measures of political participation, and of associational practices, and problem-solving activity.

### Political Participation and Problem-Solving Activity

Two-thirds (64 per cent) of citizens surveyed in Delhi expressed sympathy for a particular political party, 39 per cent of them expressing sympathy for Congress and 23 per cent of them for BJP (and less than 2 per cent of them for any other parties). The proportions of the party sympathisers pursuing problem-solving by different channels, by comparison with those who specifically state that they do not sympathise with any party is appears in Table 9.

There is little evidence that party sympathy has any particular connection with propensity to be active in problem-solving, except that Congress sympathisers may be a little more inclined than others to problem-solve by going through a political party, and BJP supporters (both amongst the poorer sections and in the population as a whole) rather more inclined than others to problem solve by means of approach to government, and less likely to go through a political party. This follows from the fact that BJP supporters are more commonly found amongst those who are somewhat better off, who are generally more likely to go to the government – reflected in the fact that whereas only 39 per cent in the population as a whole expressed sympathy for Congress and 23 per cent for BJP, the same figures amongst the poorer

sections are 48 per cent (Congress) and 16 per cent (BJP).

Evidence on party voting in the last legislative assembly elections (when 72 per cent of those interviewed in the whole sample say they voted) gives much the same result. The two distinctive points again, are that Congress supporters (by comparison with the sample as a whole) seem more inclined, and BJP supporters are less inclined to go about problem-solving via political parties; and the BJP supporters are more inclined to go to government. These points seem easily explained, as already suggested, as being a reflection of the fact that Congress has more strongly support amongst poorer people than the BJP is. Amongst those in the poorer sections who voted in the last assembly elections (and the turnout was a little higher at 74 per cent than in the population as a whole), 64 per cent voted for Congress (as compared with 53 per cent in the whole population) and only 25 per cent for BJP (compared with 37 per cent). Given this then the other remarkable feature of the electoral data is that a particularly high proportion of BJP supporters amongst the poorer sections are active problem solvers, suggesting that support for BJP amongst such people is a very deliberate choice.

The other possible connection that might exist between political activism and active problem-solving may be observed in data on participation in political rallies and demonstrations. Just as poorer people in Delhi are evidently more active in problem-solving than their wealthier fellow citizens are, so it appears that they are more active politically. In the sample for the population as a whole only 13 per cent said that they had participated in political rallies or demonstrations, whereas 21 per cent of those in the poorer sections said that they had. Exactly as we should expect, those who are politically active are also particularly active problem solvers. This is shown in the significant correlations that

**Table 8: Problem-Solving by Channel and by Labour Status**  
(In percentage)

Channel	Permanent		Casual		Self-employed	
	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor
Freq in sample	20	6	31	43	49	50
Government	43	46	32	32	46	47
Legal action	4.9	4.6	<1	<1	3.4	3.4
Political party	31	41	35	40	41	43
Big man	5	9	10	12	9	11
Demonstration	10	14	11	15	15	18
Self-provisioning	26	27	16	14	19	17
Any channel	66	67	57	60	70	70

*Note:* The categories of 'Permanent', 'Casual' and 'Self-employed', referring to different labour market positions are usually well understood by respondents, and the data come from the answers to the question 'Which of the following work situations is closest to yours? Are you (a) Permanent worker (entitled to Provident Fund), (b) Casual worker, (c) Self-employed?' The frequencies shown here are percentages of those who are economically active.

**Table 9: Problem-Solving by Channel and Party Identification**  
(In percentage)

Channel	Congress		BJP		None	
	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor
Freq sample	39	48	23	16	31	29
Government	35	41	42	46	33	30
Legal action	1.5	1.8	2.8	1.1	2.5	1.7
Political party	36	43	25	33	22	24
Big man	9	12	6	11	9	9
Demonstration	10	13	10	19	9	12
Self-provisioning	17	16	16	13	17	15
Any channel	57	63	59	69	53	53

are observed between political activism (measured by participation in demonstrations and in work for a political party) and problem-solving through any channel, and between political activism and problem-solving through government, through political parties and through demonstration.

There is also very little difference apparent here between the population as a whole and the poorer sections, suggesting that those in the wealthier part of the population who are politically active are as likely to be active in problem-solving as are poorer people, against the general trend.

### Associational Practices and Problem-Solving

Finally we may examine the relationships between active involvement in associations of different kinds, and problem-solving activity (Tables A6 and A6a). Exactly as we should expect, it is clear that those who are active in associations are distinctly more active than is usual, in problem-solving, except with regard to problem-solving through big men. The connection between associational activism and problem-solving is reflected in the significant correlations (though the coefficients are small) that are observed between participation in any kind of associational practice and problem-solving through all channels except that of going through a big man.

The connection is especially marked in the case of those who are members of neighbourhood associations. The differences between the associational activists and others when it comes to problem-solving are particularly strong in regard to approach via government, demonstrations and self-help – less so in connection with problem-solving through approach to a political party. Those in the poorer sections of the population who are active in associations are even more active problem solvers than are their equivalents in the general population, but, on the whole relatively fewer of them are active in associations than is the case in the population as a whole.

### Summing Up

This analysis gives rise to a few strong conclusions.

First, there is evidence from Delhi that, contrary to what has been observed in western countries, there is some tendency towards an inverse relationship between household income and problem-solving activity. This is shown up most strongly in the statistically very strong effect that we observe between living in a jhuggi-jhopri and problem-solving activism. Given that, in circumstances where there is a positive correlation between income and education, the same inverse relationship is not in evidence when it comes to the relationship between education and problem-solving – except insofar as those with no education at all are less likely to be problem solvers – it seems clear that those who have low incomes but who have had a fair amount of education (they have completed primary or secondary schooling) are notably active problem solvers. This suggestion is confirmed by an examination of the characteristics of the 87 persons in the sample who can be described as ‘superactive’, being politically active, active in associational life, and amongst those who problem-solve through more than one channel. Of these 87 people 57 (66 per cent) are in the poorer sections, but almost half of them (47 per cent) have completed secondary education or have at least some tertiary education. These are people more likely to be permanent workers or to be self-employed than

casual, daily-paid workers. It is such people, those amongst the poorer sections who are most likely to be politically active, and active in associations – who are in turn especially active problem solvers.

Second, there is evidence that poorer people with no education, and some others who suffer from particular disadvantage such as women and Muslims are more likely to try to solve problems through political parties, through participation in demonstrations or (in the case of women and Muslims) through big men. Problem-solving through big men is often the resort of the poorest and more disadvantaged people – and though some relatively wealthy people, as we noted amongst Sikhs, may also problem solve through big men, it is likely that the kind of social actors who are involved are different from those (like the pradhans of slum areas) resorted to by poorer people. Poorer people are more likely than the rest to be Congress Party supporters, but those amongst them who are supporters of the BJP are likely to be more active in problem-solving.

Third, though there is evidence that there is more activity around neighbourhoods and neighbourhood associations than there is around workplaces and unions, there is not much evidence of the existence of vibrant associational activity in Delhi. People rarely report that associations of any kind have been involved in their problem-solving efforts, though when they do it is most likely to have been a neighbourhood association. Yet there is strong evidence of informal collective action because people are very commonly involved in attempts to solve collective problems with their neighbours. There does appear to be quite a lot of collective action in Delhi, but it is fluid and certainly fragmented.

Fourth, and most important, it is very clear that political parties remain extremely important in the ways in which poorer people, in particular, go about problem-solving. In regard to the core hypothesis stated at the beginning of this paper, therefore, even though unions and programmatic political parties are not major players in Delhi politics, nor vehicles for the representation of poor people – and it is doubtful whether they ever have been – neither does it appear that ‘new’ social movements, local associations, or NGOs are particularly well established as alternative vehicles. Certainly neighbourhood associations have a visible role, but NGOs play almost no part in the way in which people try to solve collective social problems. Amongst the

**Table 10: Correlates of Political Activism**

Problem-Solving via:	Correlation Coefficient
Government	0.21*
Legal action	0.03
Political party	0.37*
Big man	0.15*
Demonstration	0.40*
Self-provisioning	0.11*
Any channel	0.25*

Note: \* Statistically significant.

**Table 11: Correlates of Associational Activism**

Problem-Solving via:	Correlation with any Associational Practice
Government	0.22*
Legal action	0.10*
Political party	0.21*
Big man	0.04
Demonstration	0.17*
Self-provisioning	0.16*
Any channel	0.23*

Note: \* Statistically significant.

poorest people, and those who are disadvantaged in other ways, political parties – and especially the Congress Party – and big men (and the two – the big men and the political parties – are not always very clearly distinguished) are especially significant in the ways in which they go about problem-solving. Political parties, no matter what their limitations and weaknesses, therefore, remain particularly important for poorer people; and there is little indication in these data of the existence of any other significant collective actors in the worlds of poor people in the capital city. We have some evidence, too, that many people do find political parties quite effective. Poorer people in Delhi are especially likely to be supporters of Congress, and 29 per cent of respondents in the whole sample (36 per cent in the poorer sections) said that Congress is ‘most concerned with the problems that are most important to you’ (in the words of the question that was asked). This compares with 52 per cent who said that no political party is concerned with their problems (47 per cent amongst poor) and only 13 per cent (10 per cent amongst poorer sections) who said that the BJP was most concerned with their problems. Those among the poorer sections who identified with Congress 72 per cent said that the party ‘had done a lot’ or had done ‘something’ to solve problems important to them. This compares with 6 per cent who said the same thing of unions, the mere 1 per cent of religious groups, and the 11 per cent who said it of ethnic associations. Only neighbourhood associations, of which 33 per cent (though 41 per cent in the whole sample) said that they had ‘done a lot, or something’, even remotely approached the political party in terms of popular assessment of their effectiveness in regard to problem-solving.

### Participation in Electoral Politics

Our observations from the survey on participation in electoral politics confirm the most important conclusions that we reached in the analysis of problem-solving activity. Just as we found that on the whole poorer people are more active in problem-solving, we find – most strongly in the case of those who have been participants in political events, less strongly so in the case of electoral participation – that it is the poorer and also the less well educated who are more active politically. Logistic regressions (Appendix 3) point to the following conclusions about the determinants specifically of political activism (measured by participation in political events and in party work):

- (i) Those living in jhuggi-jhopris are much more likely to be politically active than those living in the (upper income) planned colonies and unauthorised, regularised colonies.
- (ii) The poor and lower middle class people (those with household incomes of up to Rs 6,000 per month) are significantly more likely to be active than those with higher incomes.
- (iii) Tertiary education may have a small but significant negative effect.
- (iv) Women, those who are labour force inactive, and possibly permanent workers, are less likely to be politically active than others.

Poorer people are also much more likely to be Congress supporters than they are supporters of the BJP. The following analysis of more ‘formal’ political participation and of patterns of support for the two major parties in Delhi politics – the Congress and the BJP – suggests that the social cleavage, between poorer, less well educated people in more vulnerable kinds of jobs, and wealthier and better educated people in ‘good’ jobs, is reflected quite strongly in party politics. The two parties are

not very clearly distinguished programmatically (both supporting similar economic policies, for instance) but they are evidently rather sharply distinguished from each other ideologically, and through these differences apparently have strong links with different fractions of the Delhi electorate.

### Electoral Participation

Here we discuss ‘political participation’ in the narrow sense of electoral participation, party support and party activism. We noted earlier that the turn out evinced in the last Delhi legislative assembly elections as per the sample was high – at 72 per cent in the sample of the whole population and 74 per cent in the poorer sections. It makes most sense, therefore, to examine who did not participate in those elections. The data show that they are more likely to have been women than men, in the youngest age groups, Muslims rather than Hindus, tenants rather owner occupiers, relatively recent settlers, and perhaps more commonly found amongst the better educated (a pattern which corresponds, except in the last particular, concerning education, with that for those who are less likely to be involved in problem-solving). On the whole the least well-educated seem less likely to be non-participants in elections, and this appears to be most marked amongst the poorest – who also appear, except in the youngest age group to be rather less likely than those who are wealthier not to participate in elections. Otherwise, there was no discernible trend in regard to household income. Those who are self-employed were especially unlikely not to have participated in the election.

In sum, electoral participation is high, and there are some indications – albeit not strong ones – that participation may be a bit higher amongst poorer and less-well educated people, especially if they are also self-employed, broadly in line with what has been observed in Indian election studies more widely, where the phenomena associated with the second democratic upsurge have been identified.

### Patterns of Party Politics

As we have seen 39 per cent of the Delhi citizens identified with Congress, and 23 per cent with BJP; and in the last assembly elections 53 per cent reported themselves as having voted for Congress (64 per cent amongst the poorest sections) and 37 per cent for BJP (25 per cent amongst the poorest sections). What can we say further about patterns of identification with the two dominating parties in Delhi politics? We have already noted some evidence of a stronger preference for Congress amongst people in the poorest sections, by comparison with the population as a whole. Indeed, detailed analysis of our data confirms that poorer and less well educated people, as well as Muslims, younger people and men rather than women are drawn to support of Congress, while older, wealthier, better educated people, and quite a lot of those outside the labour force are drawn to the BJP.

The clear picture that emerges of the relationship between support for the Congress Party by people of lower incomes, lower levels of education, and those who are in vulnerable positions in the labour market as casual workers, or as unemployed, is further reflected in the evidence we have that BJP supporters are more active in associations. This is also an indication of the important observation that is elaborated upon later in this paper, that it is those who are wealthier and who are better educated who are most active in associational life in Delhi.

## Political Activism

The best indicator that we have of active engagement in politics, beyond electoral participation, is that for participation in political rallies and demonstrations. In the sample of the Delhi population as a whole altogether 12.8 per cent reported having participated in a political rally or demonstration on at least one occasion (5.5 per cent one or two times; 2.9 per cent three to five times; and 4.4 per cent five times or more). In view of the small numbers of respondents in each separate category, here we analyse the characteristics of all those who have participated on at least one occasion. Consistent with what we have observed concerning involvement in demonstrations as a means of problem-solving we find (Table A7) that political activists are predominantly male, in the middle of the age range, coming dominantly from amongst the least well educated and the poorer households. These patterns are reproduced amongst the poorer sections. The fact that those who are more educated in the poorer sections appear to be less likely than the less well educated amongst them to participate in political events (though they are still, of course, much more inclined to participation than are wealthier people with the same education) confirms the indications in our analysis of problem-solving that such people are especially likely to problem solve through approach to government.

### Associational Practices<sup>12</sup>

Whereas we have found that poorer and sometimes also less well educated people are more active in political life, and that poorer people (especially those who have some education) are more active problem solvers – except by means of self-help – and in these ways that the determinants of political participation in Delhi reverse the pattern found in western societies, the same is not true of associational activity. If we take associational activism as an indicator of political participation then we find a stronger tendency for wealthier and more educated people to be involved, clearly calling into question – so far as Delhi is concerned, anyway – the currently popular notion that poor people are able to represent themselves through participation in associations in civil society. Logistic regression (Appendix 3) shows that it is above all having a higher level of education that determines participation in associational activity, and that those with tertiary education are far more likely to be active.

There are at least indications, however, that poorer and less well educated people are fairly active in neighbourhood associations – though in all categories of associations, save only for ethnic groups, we find the highest incidence of associational practices in the wealthiest and in the most educated groups. In regard to the hypothesis that ‘life space’ social networks based in neighbourhoods or on religious affiliation are now producing the most politically efficacious collective actors, it is at least true in Delhi that these kinds of associations are more prominent than work space related organisations. And that poorer people are relatively active within them.

Very few amongst women, Muslims, those who are the least educated, and those who are casual workers are active in associations (Tables A8 and A9). Women are only very active in religious and in cultural associations; Sikhs are generally most active in neighbourhood associations, and Muslims very markedly less so; tenants are usually less active than owner-occupiers. There are no great differences, apparently, between the poorer

sections and the whole population, as to proportions of those at different levels of education who are active in associations, but there is an overall preponderance of better educated as well as of wealthier people in the associations of Delhi (Tables A9 and A10). High proportions of those in all kinds of associations, except for ethnic groups, have tertiary education, and at least two-thirds of those who are active (apart from in the ethnic groups) have completed secondary education. It is in religious groups and in neighbourhood associations where poorer and less well educated people are best represented – especially, in the case of neighbourhood associations, where most are those who have just completed their primary education.

The indications of our data on education and income are confirmed by those on the relations between labour status and associational practices (Table A11). It is usually the case that those who are permanent workers are most active (though this is particularly because of their membership in unions). Amongst those outside the labour force it is noteworthy that retired people are particularly active in neighbourhood associations.

## Conclusions

The broad picture that emerges is one showing a considerable difference in political participation between wealthier people who are also usually better educated, and poor people in Delhi. Wealthier people seek to solve problems for themselves through self-help, or they go to government or have recourse to legal action. They are (relatively speaking) active in associations rather than in politics. Poor people are generally more active problem solvers, particularly through political parties, and they are more active politically than wealthier people are. The differences between the poorer people of Delhi and the wealthier are reflected in consistent differences that appear in our data between those living in jhuggi-jhopri colonies (or squatter settlements and slum clusters) and those in other types of colonies (planned colonies, unauthorised and regularised colonies, and unauthorised and unregularised colonies). Regression analysis shows that the three ‘superior’ types of colonies, all have a distinctly negative effect on different indicators of political participation.

The poorest and least well educated people, and people who are disadvantaged in other ways, by virtue of sex, religion or occupation, are those who are most likely to try to solve problems through big men – and whose efforts at securing representation, therefore, are channelled in this way. This finding corresponds with our observations in the field of the role of pradhans – or ‘headmen’ – in jhuggi-jhopris. They are frequently said – by themselves and by others – to be elected, but it is very likely that this is a kind of a rationalisation, influenced by an awareness of the political correctness of having locally elected government bodies. Pradhans with whom we spoke had commonly held their

**Table 12: Associational Practices by Party Identification**

Assoc Activity	Congress	BJP	None
Religious group	8	17	11
Cultural/sports	11	17	14
Union/professional	8	10	10
Neighbourhood	13	18	16
Ethnic group	4	4	4
Cooperative	3	5	4
Any association	31	39	31

*Note:* A higher proportion of BJP supporters than of Congress supporters is active in each of the more important types of associations.

positions for a long time, and it appeared that the title is one that recognises someone who has some clout in a locality, and who is able to exercise some influence. The pradhans are usually tied up with one or other of the two major parties (and hence the difficulty in practice of distinguishing clearly between problem-solving through political parties and through big men). They use their party connections to try to get things done for people in their neighbourhoods, and in turn the political parties use them in ensuring a good turnout during election time

Poorer and less well educated people are also more likely to take part in political events. The more educated amongst the poor are particularly active in problem-solving through government, when they are supported by neighbours and friends rather than by associations. There are indications, at least, that neighbourhood associations are significant vehicles of representation for poorer people as well as for the wealthier citizens of Delhi (and this is a trend that may well accelerate if the Delhi government is successful in extending the Bhagidari Scheme to poorer colonies). But it is very clear that 'associations in civil society', or social movements – and certainly not NGOs – have not begun to rival political parties (especially, in Delhi, the Congress) as channels whereby poor people can try to represent themselves and their interests. [PW]

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## Appendix 1

### Methodology of the Study

For the purpose of the field research the National Capital Territory of Delhi was taken as one unit. Almost 94 per cent of the territory of Delhi is also under the administrative jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi; 3 per cent is under the jurisdiction of the New Delhi Municipal Corporation; and 3 per cent under that of the Cantonment Board. Delhi is divided into 70 constituencies for elections to its vidhan sabha (legislative assembly), each with a population in the range of 125 to 2,00,000. These assembly constituencies were taken as the primary units for the survey.

In common with the Sao Paulo and Mexico City surveys which were carried out alongside the Delhi survey, the sample design included an 'over-sample' of particular areas, as well as a general sample of the rest of the city. In Delhi the over-sample was based on the criteria of (i) extent of state presence; (ii) voter turnout in the Delhi assembly elections of 1998; (iii) concentration of workers in the population (though the variation in Delhi is modest). It was sought, therefore, to define areas with high state presence, high turnout (50 per cent and above) and high concentration of workers, and the reverse of these characteristics, and different combinations of them. The preparation of the sample design involved a considerable effort of GIS analysis to map census data onto assembly constituencies. The constituencies selected were as follows:

- S1 = S1a [Wazirpur] – high state presence, high voting turnout, high concentration of workforce
- S1b [Model Town] – high state presence, high voting turnout, low concentration of workforce
- S2 = S2a [Jungpura] – high state presence, low voting turnout, high concentration of workforce
- S2b [Yamuna Vihar] – high state, low voting, low concentration of workforce

- S3 = S3a [Harinagar] – low state presence, high voting turnout, high concentration of workforce
- S3b [Ballimaran] – low state, high voting, low concentration of workforce
- S4 = S4a [Okhla] – low state presence, low voting turnout, high concentration of workforce
- S4b [Rohtas Nagar] – low state, low voting, low concentration of workforce

*State presence* was given by the officially defined categories of human settlements that appear in Delhi, and which are differentially endowed with facilities provided by the state. They are: *Planned colonies [PC]*: With a high level of public infrastructure, public services and of law and order

[*Source of data*: Dharamrajan Expert Committee on Property Tax listed these colonies, constituencywise]

*Unauthorised and regularised colonies [UR]*: Described as 'unauthorised' because they have come up as the result of unauthorised sale of land by private developers or landowners. Till 1985 the government of Delhi 'regularised' these colonies by providing services on a reduced scale to them. In 1985 public interest litigation in the Supreme Court led to a prohibition on further such regularisation. There are 660 such colonies spread over Delhi. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi provides some infrastructure and services to them, but on a reduced scale by comparison with the Planned Colonies.

[*Source of data*: A list of 557 such colonies was provided by the Municipal Corporation, Town Planning Division. GIS used to map these colonies onto constituencies.]

*Unauthorised and unregularised colonies [UU]*: Colonies that have not been regularised by the Delhi government because of the public interest litigation just referred to. There are 1,071 such colonies. The government has been allowed by the court to provide the following services to them on grounds of health and hygiene: Infrastructure – drains and a public road; Services – electricity and water (though these services are not provided for UU colonies established on government-owned land)

[*Source of data*: a list of 1071 colonies was provided by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Town Planning Division. GIS used to map these colonies onto constituencies.]

*Jhuggi-jhopri colonies, or squatter settlements and slum clusters [JJ]*: thousands of which are mapped in almost all the assembly constituencies of Delhi. They are provided with very little infrastructure or services, beyond community water facilities, street lighting and (perhaps) community toilets.

[*Source of data*: Constituencywise list of JJ colonies provided by the JJ and slum department of the government of Delhi. Ballimaran constituency (S3b) of the Walled City of Old Delhi was declared a slum by the government of India in the 1950s.] State presence was measured by the extent of each of these settlement types in the different constituencies.

The survey design required the canvassing of 80 citizen questionnaires in each of the eight areas S1a-S4b, distributed according to the representation within them of the different colony types. Colonies of different types were listed and particular colonies selected for survey at random. The research team, from the Developing Countries Research Centre of the University of Delhi (all holders of master's degrees in Political Science) visited the chosen colonies, surveyed the geographical location of houses, and made contact with local authorities in order to acquire voters' lists or colony directories. Where houses were not numbered, the team numbered the houses. Blocks or streets were randomly selected, and houses

identified, starting from the northern corner of the block, or end of the street, according to a skip principle (to obtain the required number of interviews from the block or street). Where the selected house contained more than one household, the household to be interviewed was selected at random. The members of the selected household were listed, and a particular respondent identified, again at random (according to a formula devised for the Sao Paulo survey). Data were not collected, therefore, only from heads of household. When it was not possible to make contact with the identified respondent after three attempts, the case was closed.

In addition to the over-sample (of  $8 \times 80 = 640$ ) a further 880 interviews were conducted across the remaining 62 constituencies of Delhi. These interviews were distributed according to the numbers of voters in each constituency, and the representation

within them of the different colony types. Otherwise the procedure described in paragraph 4 was followed.

The principal difficulty that was encountered in carrying out the survey was the high rate of refusal in the wealthier colonies (PC and UR). In the end 1464 interviews were conducted (out of the planned 1480); and we ended up with 1401 complete responses. This sample in fact somewhat under-represents the JJ population and over-represents UR in particular; but when weights are applied according to the representation of the population of Delhi in different colony types, the results of analysis are not significantly different, statistically.

The questionnaire, available on the RRP Project website, was canvassed according to the preference of the respondent in Hindi, Punjabi or sometimes in English.

## Appendix 2 Reference Tables

**Table A1: Problem-Solving by Channel and by Sex**  
(In percentage)

Channel	Male		Female	
	All	Poor	All	Poor
Government	43	43	25	28
Legal action	2.9	2.3	1.2	0.5
Political party	38	41	15	20
Big man	8	10	8	13
Demonstration	14	17	4	7
Self-provisioning	21	18	12	9
Any channel	66	67	43	47

**Table A2: Problem-Solving by Channel and by Religion**  
(In percentage)

Channel	Hindu		Muslim		Sikh	
	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor
Freq in sample	76	85	18	11	4	2
Government	36	38	29	32	39	58
Legal action	2	2	1	1.5	4	0
Political party	29	36	29	22	20	25
Big man	8	11	12	17	23	0
Demonstration	10	15	8	5	7	17
Self-provisioning	17	14	22	17	14	25
Any channel	57	60	56	58	51	75

**Table A3: Education Levels and Household Incomes**  
(In percentage)

Income	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Edu						
None	50	37	14	17	7	5	2
Primary incomplete	8	7	6	2	3	1	3
Primary complete	12	8	7	6	3	5	2
Secondary incomplete	14	17	18	11	16	11	3
Secondary complete	14	23	36	37	34	29	21
Tertiary	2	7	18	27	37	50	69

Notes: (i) Household income codes as in text Table 7. (ii) There is a significant correlation (Spearman) at 10 per cent and 1 per cent levels between the continuous variables for household income and education.

**Table A4: Problem-Solving by Channel and by Employment Status**  
(In percentage)

Channel	Employed		Unemployed		Inactive	
	All	Poor	All	Poor	All	Poor
Government	41	40	48	56	28	29
Legal action	3	2	2	3	1	<1
Political party	37	42	35	33	17	19
Big man	8	11	11	8	5	8
Demonstration	13	16	17	18	5	8
Self-provisioning	20	16	14	13	14	10
Any channel		66	63	69		46

**Table A5: Educational Level and Labour Status**  
(Poorer Sections)  
(In percentage)

Labour Status	Educational Level					
	None	Primary In-complete	Primary Complete	Secondary In-complete	Secondary Complete	University
Permanent	4	3	3	3	8	18
Casual	46	61	55	43	39	18
Self-employed	49	35	42	53	53	63

**Table A6: Problem-Solving by Channel and Associational Activity**  
(In percentage)

Those involved in:

Channel	Religious Group	Cultural/Sports	Union/Prof	Neighbourhood	Ethnic Group	Cooperative	Any Participation
Freq in sample	11	14	9	16	4	3	
Government	50	44	52	59	43	-	50
Political party	38	30	36	55	41	-	41
Big man	11	10	8	9	7	-	10
Demonstration	18	14	19	21	25	-	17
Self-provisioning	23	27	30	30	23	-	25
Any channel	66	65	71	82	66	79	71

**Table A6a: Problem-Solving by Channel and Associational Practices (Poorer Sections)**  
(In percentage)

Those involved in:

Channel	Religious Group	Cultural/Sports	Union/Professional	Neighbourhood	Ethnic Group	Cooperative	Any Participation
Freq sample	10	8	5	14	4	<2	
Government	49	56	63	62	27	-	
Political party	42	42	44	66	27	-	
Big Man	5	18	7	12	5	-	
Demonstration	24	22	33	29	23	-	
Self-provisioning	15	26	37	21	23	-	
Any channel	68	80	89	89	55	67	

Notes: (i) Percentages shown here are the proportions of the samples who have been members of the associations of different types in the last five years. (ii) Figures not given for legal action in the different problem-solving channels, nor for membership in cooperatives amongst the different types of associations because in all cases the numbers are very small.

## Appendix 2 (Contd)

**Table A7: Participants in Political Events**  
(Percentage of whole sample)

	Gender		Age					
	Male	Female	1	2	3	4	5	6
Main sample	19	4	10	12	16	14	10	13
Poorer sections	27	9	14	18	26	25	20	26
						Party Support		
Education	0	1	2	3	4	5	Congress	BJP
Main sample	23	19	19	14	10	6	16	10
Poorer sections	28	22	25	16	15	17	24	17
Income	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Main sample	27	21	14	7	5	8	3	

**Table A8: Associational Practices by Gender, Religion and Residence**

Practice	Male	Female	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh	Owner	Tenant
Religious group	12	13	11	8	20	12	9
Cultural/sports	15	12	14	8	23	14	11
Union/professional	14	3	10	5	10	9	11
Neighbourhood	22	7	16	6	20	19	9
Ethnic group	6	2	4	7	4	4	6
Cooperative	4	2	4	2	3	4	3
Any practices	41	26	35	25	43	36	30

**Table A10: Associational Practices by Household Income**

Income	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Religious group	13	9	11	14	11	13	15
Cultural/sports	9	8	10	11	14	19	28
Union/professional	<1	5	6	8	15	12	21
Neighbourhood	16	13	12	18	16	15	23
Ethnic groups	5	3	4	5	5	4	4
Cooperative	0	1	3	5	4	5	7
Any practices	31	27	30	37	36	39	51

**Table A11: Associational Practices by Labour Status**

Practice	Outside LF				Inside LF			
	Total	Home-maker	Retired Student	Un-employed	Total	Per-manent	Casual	Self-employed
Religious group	12	12	19	6	9	12	10	12
Cultural/sports	15	8	19	40	11	13	19	11
Union/profession	4	0	25	3	2	14	42	3
Neighbourhood	12	7	39	12	12	18	22	14
Ethnic groups	3	2	3	2	8	5	6	8
Cooperative	3	1	17	3	0	4	8	3
Any practices	28	22	51	36	28	41	66	32

**Table A9: Associational Practices By Education**

Education	0		1		2		3		4		5		Per Cent in 5
	Pop	Poor	Pop	Poor	Pop	Poor	Pop	Poor	Pop	Poor	Pop	Poor	
Religious group	6	5	10	10	9	6	12	14	14	13	14	15	36
Cultural/sports	5	6	10	7	5	6	7	8	13	11	25	13	56
Union/profession	4	3	2	2	5	6	6	5	8	5	17	6	55
Neighbourhood	10	11	17	17	15	20	16	16	15	14	19	11	38
Ethnic group	3		5		6		6		4		4		27
Cooperative	1		2		0		1		3		7		63
Any association Practices	22		31		26		28		34		49		

Notes: \*\* data for Poorer Sections

- (i) The final column here [ per cent in 5] shows the proportion of all those who have been active in associations of different types in the last five years who have had education to tertiary level.
- (ii) Figures for participation in ethnic groups and cooperatives amongst the poorer sections not computed because the total numbers are so small.

Regression Results<sup>13</sup>

In the main text of the paper I have reported my interpretations of a series of tests of the influence of different factors. In each case the series starts with simple tests of factors on their own, starting with income and education, and then including a number of further factors in turn. These factors are analysed on their own, with income and education, and then in more complex combinations: employment status ('unemployed' and 'labour force inactive' by comparison with 'labour force active'); type of contract ('permanent' and 'renewable' by comparison with 'temporary'); age; gender (female by comparison with male); religion (muslim and sikh, by comparison with Hindu); and type of colony (planned colony, unauthorised and regularised colony, and unauthorised and unregularised colony, by comparison always with jhuggi-jhopri/slum cluster). All the regressions have been computed both with and without account being taken of the fixed effects of the district of the city; but in the following results are reported with account taken of the district fixed effect. The following table gives the results of the three major regression models that were computed. Note that some of the conclusions reported in the text are derived from some of the other computations.

	Any Problem-Solving*	P-S Approach Government	P-S Political Party	P-S Demonstration	Political Activism	Any Assoc'n Activity
Incband 2	0.03 [0.04]	0.01 [0.06]	-0.06 [0.05]	-0.07 [0.02]+++	-0.02 [0.03]	-0.09 [0.04]+
Incband 3	0.07 [0.05]	-0.02 [0.06]	0.09 [0.06]	-0.06 [0.02]+++	0.02 [0.04]	-0.04 [0.06]
Incband 4	0.02 [0.05]	-0.07 [0.06]	0.1 [0.07]	-0.07 [0.03]++	-0.05 [0.04]	0.03 [0.07]
Incband 5	0.02 [0.05]	-0.08 [0.06]	0.08 [0.10]	-0.06 [0.03]++	-0.10 [0.03]+++	-0.03 [0.06]
Incband 6	-0.01 [0.06]	-0.10 [0.05]+	0.02 [0.07]	-0.09 [0.02]+++	0 [0.05]	-0.03 [0.06]
Incband 7	0.03 [0.07]	-0.08 [0.06]	-0.01 [0.08]	-0.08 [0.02]+++	-0.08 [0.04]++	0.03 [0.06]
Eduband 1	-0.03 [0.07]	0.05 [0.07]	-0.06 [0.06]	-0.06 [0.03]++	-0.05 [0.04]	0.07 [0.07]
Eduband 2	0.19 [0.05]+++	0.16 [0.06]+++	0.04 [0.08]	0.07 [0.06]	0.01 [0.04]	0.05 [0.08]
Eduband 3	0.13 [0.05]++	0.15 [0.05]+++	0.12 [0.06]+	0.03 [0.06]	0 [0.05]	0.07 [0.07]
Eduband 4	0.2 [0.05]+++	0.22 [0.06]+++	0.16 [0.06]+++	0.08 [0.05]	0.03 [0.04]	0.13 [0.06]++
Eduband 5	0.21 [0.07]+++	0.27 [0.07]+++	0.17 [0.08]++	0.14 [0.05]++	0 [0.05]	0.23 [0.07]+++
Planned colony	-0.44 [0.09]+++	-0.18 [0.09]++	-0.39 [0.03]+++	-0.12 [0.02]+++	-0.16 [0.03]+++	0.04 [0.10]
UR colony	-0.35 [0.07]+++	-0.21 [0.06]+++	-0.34 [0.04]+++	-0.08 [0.02]++	-0.15 [0.03]+++	-0.06 [0.06]
UU colony	-0.37 [0.08]+++	-0.19 [0.06]+++	-0.31 [0.04]+++	-0.08 [0.03]+++	-0.11 [0.03]+++	-0.05 [0.07]
Inactive	-0.22 [0.04]+++	-0.03 [0.04]	-0.07 [0.04]+	-0.02 [0.03]	-0.18 [0.02]+++	-0.17 [0.03]+++
Permanent contract	0.19 [0.08]++				-0.16 [0.08]+	0.3 [0.08]+++
Female	-0.31 [0.11]+++	-0.14 [0.04]+++	-0.18 [0.03]+++	-0.09 [0.03]+++	-0.21 [0.02]+++	-0.18 [0.03]+++
Age	0 [0.00]++	0 [0.00]+++	0.01 [0.00]+++	0 [0.00]	0 [0.00]+++	0 [0.00]++
HH size	0.01 [0.01]+	0.01 [0.01]	0.01 [0.01]	0.01 [0.00]+++	0 [0.01]	-0.01 [-0.01]
Muslim		0.01 [0.08]	0 [0.05]	-0.02 [0.02]	-0.02 [0.06]	-0.2 [0.06]+++
Sikh		0.09 [0.07]	-0.04 [0.07]	0 [0.04]	-0.02 [0.04]	0.01 [0.07]
No of observations	1299	1261	1196	989	1112	1278

Note: \* Note that some other models of the determinants of problem-solving by any channel do show that those in the upper income bands do less.

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- 1 See for example, Roberts, writing with regard to Latin America: 'The manifestations of this [crisis of political representation] were legion, including voter abstention, declining partisan identification, electoral volatility, the rise of independent candidates and "anti-politics" outsiders, and the demise of traditional political parties as well as secondary associations like labour unions ...there was growing sentiment over the course of the 1990s that party systems were failing in a number of countries...' (2002:10)
- 2 See, for example, World Bank 1997, Chapter 7; or for a scholarly argument, Avritzer 2002.
- 3 Field research in Delhi was carried out by a team from the Developing Countries Research Centre of Delhi University, directed by Neera Chandhoke and Manindra Thakur – to all of whom all credit is due for an enormous amount of hard work.
- 4 A significant caveat must be entered about the survey. In pilot testing the field research team found that in many cases asking about caste gave offence to respondents, and so the question of caste identity had to be omitted. This is a limitation of the findings reported here.
- 5 Only 37 per cent of the respondents in our survey had been born in Delhi; and 27 per cent had been born in UP, 7 per cent in Haryana, and 5 per cent each in Punjab, Rajasthan and Bihar.
- 6 Using survey data for all-India for 2001-02, the NCAER has described as 'Low income' households earning up to Rs 45,000 per annum, or Rs 3,750 per month. Both the cost of living and incomes are generally higher in Delhi than elsewhere and so it seems reasonable to suppose that in the capital, in 2003, household incomes of up to Rs 5,000 per month may be considered 'low income' or poor. The data that appear in this paper for those with incomes up to Rs 6,000 per month refer, then, to the 'poorer sections', though they may include some at the upper end who would be considered by the NCAER to be 'lower middle income'. At the other end, the NCAER described as 'high income' those households with incomes of Rs 1,80,000 per annum (or Rs 15,000 per month), and above, and it found that these households accounted for 5.7 per cent of the population. The Delhi sample, on the other hand, includes 14 per cent of respondents with incomes of more than Rs 20,000 per month. Given that we must expect there to be a significantly higher proportion of high income households in the capital than there is nationally, the match between the Delhi survey data on household incomes and the NCAER survey data is encouraging, because it suggests that the Delhi data are reasonably sound. It must be noted, on the other hand, that as many as 20 per cent of respondents in the Delhi survey gave no response to questions about household incomes.
- 7 The form of the questions asked was as follows:  
 'Thinking about the problems we have been talking about, I'd like to ask you about things that you may have done over the last five years to address problems like these:  
 (1) In the last five years have you approached the government to try to address these problems?  
 (2) ..... have you, alone or with other people, brought any legal case in order to try to solve any problems that we have spoken about?  
 (3) ..... have you approached a political party to try to.....  
 (4) Sometimes people approach a big man [dada, neta, caste, region, language group leader] to help solve or fix a problem. In the last five years have you approached such a big man to solve any problems we have been talking about?  
 (5) In the last five years have you ever taken part in any kind of demonstration or other public protest to try .....  
 (6) Sometimes people join together to solve problems on their own, for

example by organising a committee, chit fund, or helping in home construction. Have you taken part in any kinds of activities like these?’

- 8 There is indeed a significant correlation between problem-solving through political parties and through big men, but it is a weak one.
- 9 The figures for Bangalore, for comparison, are 14 per cent (government), 3 per cent (legal action), 24 per cent (political party), 3 per cent (big man), 11 per cent (demonstration), 7 per cent (self-provisioning) and 40 per cent (any channel); for Sao Paulo: 20 per cent, 4 per cent, 3 per cent, 5 per cent, 5 per cent, 9 per cent and 38 per cent. The much greater importance of political parties in the way citizens in the Indian cities go about problem-solving is very striking.
- 10 The public problems that Delhi citizens have sought to solve have involved, especially, supply of electricity and of water:

Problem-Solving Channels and Types of Problems (Per Cent)

Channel	Electricity	Water	Others*
Government	49	31	31
Legal action	16	3	81
Political party	30	39	51
Big man	26	44	48
Demonstration	34	33	51
Self-provisioning	13	9	84**

Note: \* The three columns do not sum to 100 per cent because the ‘electricity’ and the ‘water’ columns may include overlap in view of the specification by respondents of ‘electricity and water’ as the problems sought to be solved.

\*\* The most commonly cited problem that was the object of self-provisioning was sanitation.

It appears, therefore, that citizens have approached government directly, and have demonstrated, especially over electricity and water supply, particularly over the former. They have approached political parties, or big men, particularly over water supplies, while self-provisioning has been directed in particular at solving problems over sanitation. All the channels, however – other than direct approach to government – have been used even more for trying to solve a wide variety of other sorts of problems.

The effectiveness of the different channels did not differ a great deal, except that in both the sample as a whole and amongst the poorer sections problem-solving through big men, and (especially) through self-provisioning were found distinctly more effective than the rest. In the case of all the other channels 40-45 per cent of respondents reported that their problem-solving activity had either ‘achieved a lot’ or had been

- ‘somewhat successful’ (35-40 per cent in the case of people in the poorer sections). The equivalent statistics were 56 per cent and 86 per cent in case of problem-solving through big men and through self-provisioning.
- 11 Relevant tables from which conclusions are recorded in this section appear in Appendix 2.
- 12 The analysis has been conducted for those who had been active in associations in the five years up to the time of the survey.
- 13 The analytical work reported here was done by Ameet Morjaria, research student in the Department of Economics at the London School of Economics, to whom all credit is due.

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